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DN EXTRA

March 2007

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**Families
get a break**

Respite cash for carers



DN EXTRA...

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Care boost for carers

BY IVY BROADHEAD

The government has launched a new £33 million package of support for carers in England.

Care minister Ivan Lewis announced last month that, under the New Deal for Carers, £25m will go towards providing short-term and emergency respite care, with £3m to set up a new carers' helpline.

There will also be £5m to support the development of an expert carers programme.

Mr Lewis said the package could "radically improve the quality of life for carers, empowering them with information and skills, and most importantly, putting them back in control".

Chancellor Gordon Brown also announced an update of the 1999 national carers strategy, which he said would be "the most far-reaching national consultation ever on the future of carers".

Imelda Redmond, chief executive of Carers UK, welcomed the measures, and said: "We need for this to be the start of a visionary strategy which

sets the agenda for the next decade."

But Francine Bates, a member of the Every Disabled Child Matters campaign, said that emergency respite should not be seen as an alternative to regular breaks for families.

She said: "The funding being announced today is welcome, but will not go very far towards meeting the needs of the 100,000 families with severely disabled children."

And Simone Aspis, of the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council, condemned the package and said the money should have gone to disabled people themselves.

She said: "We fear carers' needs will take preference over the needs of disabled people, which is wrong."

In the same week as the government announcement, a private members bill that would have imposed a duty on local authorities to provide short breaks for families with disabled children failed to win a second reading in the House of Commons.



Pictured from top: Gordon Brown, Simone Aspis and Imelda Redmond



On the cover (and above): Nine-year-old Victoria Nice tends to an allotment in Baldock, created by young offenders from the Stevenage and Letchworth area. Inspired by an allotment holder with motor neurone disease who was unable to access his plot, the project was designed to give other disabled gardeners the opportunity to use an allotment.

DN online's latest success

The number of people visiting DN's website has rocketed by almost 9,000 in just two months.

"Unique users" visiting www.disabilitynow.org.uk passed 30,000 for the first time in January, and then shot up again in February to more than 36,000.

The new statistics mean that unique users to our website have more than quadrupled since it was relaunched in September 2004, up from 9,039 to 36,233 on 21 February, 2007.

The February figure had seen a rise of 4,792 since 21 January. The January figure had also seen a steep rise of 4,154 from 27,287 at the end of 2006.

Prisons failing thousands

BY PAUL CARTER

Thousands of people locked up in the UK's prisons may have learning difficulties, according to new research.

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT) said almost 6,000 prisoners have an IQ of less than 70, which affects their ability to cope with prison life and communicate effectively.

But the charity said there was currently no routine screening or assessment of prisoners to identify their needs properly.

It claimed this could lead to people with learning difficulties being unable to benefit, or even be excluded, from programmes designed to stop re-offending.

Juliet Lyon, director of the PRT, said: "It raises important questions about how they got caught up in the criminal justice system in the first place and

whether those responsible for special education, social care and family support could have done more to prevent this."

Skills minister Phil Hope said the government had "set in train major reforms for offender education".

He said: "The new Offenders Learning and Skills Service is in place and requires learning providers to assess the individual additional learning needs of offenders, introduce effective and comprehensive inclusive learning strategies and put in place additional learning support."

But David Congdon, head of campaigns and policy for Mencap, said: "Anybody in the UK's prison system who has a learning disability should receive the support they need to develop skills and abilities that will help them whilst they are in prison and once they have returned to the community."



Heel Caesar: British woman Wendy Morrell, pictured with assistance dog Caesar in Washington DC, is the new European vice president of the International Association of Assistance Dog Partners (IAADP). She was offered the role at an IAADP board meeting and conference in Baltimore in January.

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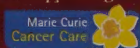
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Blue badge blues

BY IVY BROADHEAD

A Scottish MP has accused her local council of discriminating against disabled people by banning them from holding both a blue badge and a taxicard.

Aberdeenshire Council said the new policy had been brought in due to "budget pressures".

The council changed its criteria last year to allow taxicard users to also hold a blue badge.

But in January the council reversed the decision after the scheme's costs more than doubled.

A spokesman for Aberdeenshire Council said: "Rather than reduce the amount of discount, it was decided to remove eligibility for those who already held a disabled parking blue badge."

But Anne Begg (above), MP for Aberdeen South and president of The Blue Badge Network, said:



"It may be the case that many disabled people, particularly those with fluctuating conditions, will require a taxicard for the times when they are not able to drive a car or no driver is available and the blue badge for the occasions when friends or family are available to drive them around."

The MP has called for politicians to lobby the council to change the policy, which she said was discriminatory.

The council said that "comments of users are being taken on board", and it would look at the matter again this month.



Raking it in: Students from Stockport have been helping out in the gardens of Tatton Hall in Knutsford. The students, from the Royal School for the Deaf and Communication Disorders, spend one morning a week on a work placement at the National Trust property. Pictured left to right are head gardener Simon Tetlow with students and staff Liam Wheatley, Marion Fahy, James Beresford, Peter Ling and Sam Smith.

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Welsh free care call

BY PAUL CARTER

Nearly two-thirds of people in Wales are in favour of free home care for disabled and older people, according to a new survey.

The poll was published by the disability charity Leonard Cheshire as it launched a study into home care in Wales*, which showed confusion about how to apply for home care, what support was available, and eligibility criteria.

Joanne Foster, policy and assembly officer for Leonard Cheshire, said: "This poll, published as we launch a report into home care in Wales, shows beyond doubt that people are more likely to vote for political parties in May's [Welsh] assembly election that prioritise tackling disability poverty."

In 2003, Labour Welsh Assembly candidates promised to deliver free home care to all disabled and older people, and all carers for people with mental health problems, in Wales.

But after it won power, the Labour-run Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) admitted it would not "fully deliver" on its pledge.

A WAG spokeswoman said: "The alternative three-year £76 million package for older and disabled people which we announced last February is being delivered.

"This includes funding for extra services to carers, an improved payment buffer for people on low incomes, improved community equipment services and extending telecare to many more people. This is on top of a £45m real terms increase for adult social services in 2006/07.

"These proposals go further than our initial announcement last February when the health minister said that we would reduce the impact of charging for individuals receiving domiciliary personal care only."

* *Home Free; for a copy, tel: 02920 450433 or visit www.leonard-cheshire.org/?lid=4768*

More workers to be registered

The social care register will be opened to domiciliary care workers later this year, the government has announced.

Ivan Lewis, the care services minister, announced the plans at the annual conference of the General Social Care Council (GSCC) last month.

The GSCC administers the register, which lists people who work in social care and ensures that they are trained and fit to work in the industry.

Following the registration of domiciliary care workers, those working in care homes, residential family centres, fostering agencies and adoption agencies will begin to be registered next year.

But Ian Loynes, chief executive of the Southampton Centre for Independent Living, warned against expanding registration

any further than those groups, such as including those working for people on direct payments.

He said people "go on direct payments to take the responsibility" for those they employ, and that it "should never be compulsory" for those employees to be on the register.

GSCC chair Rodney Brooke said opening the register to domiciliary care workers would "mark a significant change in care services".

Nick Johnson, chief executive of the Social Care Association, said it was "essential" that domiciliary care workers were given priority in the registration process, to minimise the risk of unsuitable people having access to vulnerable people.

So far, the register includes social workers and student social workers.



Chain reaction: A new rehabilitation service in Liverpool will provide care for five people with acquired brain injury, physical impairments and complex needs. Redford Court Lodge, run by the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust, was opened last month by the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Joan Lang (left).



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DN HACKED OFF

CATHY REAY

Trying to keep my hands clean, while coping with all the dirty ethics forced on journalists

It's funny how so much can change within a matter of one month. OK, so it's not really funny. In fact, the most dramatic changes really would not be at all amusing, such as my sudden death (perhaps caused by the worryingly vast quantity of Diet Coke that I consume), drastic illness (see last point), deportation (well, I am half Irish), or a huge change in career-based beliefs.

Since I remain safe and sound in my little Hackney cubbyhole, powers of elimination suggest that I have experienced the latter – and perhaps most unexciting – of the four unfortunate circumstances.

Don't get me wrong, I still love journalism and I still love music. I still love going to shows, reviewing bands, meeting them and getting to dissect their personal and professional lives. But I hate all the inescapable behind-closed-doors dirty ethics forced on journalists.

'I've yet to find a publication that shares my sense of morality'

I've recently been approached several times by magazines asking me to write something with

a specific angle, however untrue, just to keep their readers happy. I haven't once taken them up on their offers, and hope I'm never in the position where I am forced to. Perhaps things would be easier if I did, perhaps I wouldn't need to worry about my future, but for me it would be a bit like saying Blair should stay in government for eternity. I'd be promoting something that I feel is destructive to society. However trite this sounds, I'm proud to love the music I do, and I want my writing to reflect this. But after working my way through all the publications I would ever want to commit to full-time, I

still have yet to find one that shares my sense of morality.

Meanwhile, as my final year draws to a close, the 10,000 word dissertation looms. I have yet to begin, naturally, and am starting to feel a little frantic whenever I think about it (which isn't often, as I have mastered blocking it from my memory almost completely). The topic I have chosen is the ever-changing faces and fazes of the music industry and music journalism. How fitting, then, that I have recently witnessed the seedy side of the industry firsthand. Something tells me that I am going to hope no-one else but my tutor sees this piece of work...

Cathy Reay writes in *DN Extra* every month as part of our Hacked Off campaign to get more disabled people into journalism and stamp out their misrepresentation in the media.

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With Britain expected to have its first visually-impaired Prime Minister this spring, blind councillor Keith Rothwell calls for more disabled people to get involved in local politics

In a matter of months, it is expected that Gordon Brown will move into 10 Downing Street to become the next Prime Minister. The significance of this should not be lost on your readers. Under the 1948 National Assistance Act, Gordon Brown is classed as blind, which means Britain will officially have its first blind Prime Minister.

In an arena badly unrepresented by people with disabilities, this could be the fillip that many need to consider entering public life.

As a councillor in one of England's most deprived wards, in Bury, Lancashire, I consider it a great privilege and have been active in the Labour Party since 1964.

The eye condition which causes my blindness is retinitis pigmentosa, which I inherited from my mother. However, we both had a so-called "stable form", meaning we had some residual sight. As a consequence, I grew up with "bad sight", meaning that I remained in my community and went to "ordinary" schools.

It wasn't until I was 27 that I actually discovered that I was blind! Years later, working at the North Western Regional Health Authority headquarters, my stable



People power: Keith Rothwell (above and top, right) at work in Bury

condition deteriorated and the small but very useful amount of residual sight I had disappeared in about six months. I suddenly could no longer do my job.

Leaving in 1992, I realised that I now had more time to become involved in local community and political activities, although I had to work out how I might do things without the benefit of sight. I could no longer go delivering leaflets or door-step canvassing alone. Whilst I cannot honestly say that I miss the former, I very much miss the latter.

I would not be honest if I claimed that my lack of sight did not inhibit what I can do or that I have not met prejudice from the public, council staff and political colleagues – although I like to think that much of this prejudice arises more from igno-

rance than malice. Consequently, I feel I have a duty to educate the sighted world with which I come into contact and dispel the ignorance. How I hate it when attending some function at which there are many people, being led to a table. I think that I am being included, only to find out later that I am in a corner or away from the action "so that you won't get knocked!"

It can also be frustrating when papers are placed around the table at a meeting, which can result in less than diplomatic comments being heard from my direction. Similar frustrations are felt when long and detailed items are sent to me the day before a meeting, meaning that I have to sit up all night "reading" them – a sighted person can scan down the document and pick out salient information. But someone using access technology (such as speech output) must first ensure that the document is formatted to best work with the screen reader and then "read" through the whole document a line at a time, letting the screen reader read most of the line before moving to the next line, trying to remember as much of the pertinent information as possible.

For anyone with a disability,

particularly blindness, thinking of becoming more involved in public life, I would recommend they first become active either within a political party, local voluntary and community organisations or local tenants and residents groups, and attend a few meetings of the council so as to get a feel for it and to find some strategies for dealing with your disability. I do not feel that I would have been able to cope with the work of being a councillor without having taken this route.

In my time as a councillor, since June 2004, I have served for two years as the council's lead member for disability, on the area board and area youth action group, on the audit committee, the performance management scrutiny panel, and the safe, strong, and confident communities scrutiny commission. In addition, I have represented the council on several external bodies, some, but not all, of which relate to disability, including the local Society for the Blind. I am particularly proud to say also that I am the local education authority governor on a local Church of England primary school.

So why then is Britain so under-represented by people with disabilities in politics? There are numerous reasons, and too many to debate here. But from my own experience, I would say that problems associated with state benefits and disincentives for people with disabilities (eg expenses are deducted from living costs) is disempowering and unfair.

Nonetheless, despite this negative point, I would urge anyone considering getting involved in public life, particularly as a local councillor, to follow your ambition, provided you accept it will not always be easy and sometimes it will be downright difficult. However, the rewards can make even the most pig-headed colleague or member of the public bearable. And guess what? You might just enjoy it!

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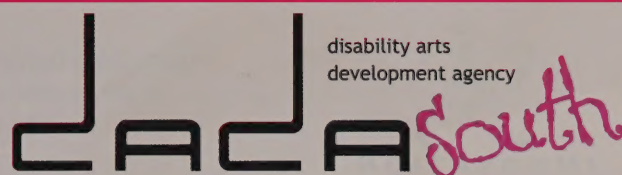
You can find out more about us, and our work, on our website www.dfid.gov.uk. You'll also find information about specific vacancies, opportunities, and an electronic application on the site.



DFID

Department for
International
Development

www.dfid.gov.uk



Dada-South, the disability arts development agency for the South East is looking to recruit a sensational...

Professional Development Manager (part time – 3 days per week)

NJC Scale SO2 points 33-34 (£26,187 – £26,928) pro rata

To support and inspire the professional and creative development of Disabled and Deaf artists in the South East.

Please contact Stevie Rice, Director, for an informal discussion and further information

For application packs please send a large stamped addressed envelope to: Dada-South (Recruitment), PO Box 136, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 9AD or email stevie@dada-south.org.uk Or you can tel/fax: (01580) 714642

We particularly welcome applications from disabled people across the South East region

Deadline for applications: **Tuesday 20th March 2007**



Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People

Promoting the interests of Disabled People in Oxfordshire

Registered Company No 3431583
Registered Charity No. 1065090

35 Leopold Street, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 1TW.
Phone & minicom: 01865 792226; fax: 01865 722285.

Covent Garden Street Opera in partnership with the Arts Council and Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People.

Are looking to cast, create and produce a 40 minute opera.

We are looking for: Sopranos, tenors, baritones, basses, evaluation film maker.

Contact: opera@deledesma.fsnet.co.uk

Hartgrove Farm

Shaftesbury Dorset
Award winning holiday cottages on working farm. A really lovely holiday for disabled guests and their families. Glorious countryside and views. Logfires. C.H. Wheel-in shower. Mobile Hoist and other equipment.
Tel: 01747 811830
www.hartgrovefarm.co.uk

Normandy France

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www.normandyfarmhouses.co.uk

Cornwall – Nr Truro.

2 newly converted barns on small family farm. Fully wheelchair accessible. Ensuite bedrooms. Sleeps up to 6. For details contact Esme Eyles 01726 883240 or www.treworgansfarm.co.uk

DEADLINE – Disability Now
April 2007 published 24
March. Classified dead-
lines: Booking: 9 March.
Copy: 13 March.



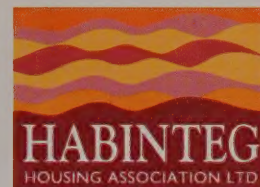
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BECAUSE WE'RE ALL DIFFERENT....



Habinteg is the leading national provider of affordable accessible homes. We have 60 schemes located from Tyneside to Cornwall. We champion inclusion by building sustainable neighbourhoods of Lifetime Homes and wheelchair standard properties for disabled and non-disabled people to share and enjoy. Our thoughtful designs and on-site support services make a real difference to people's lives and help them to maintain their independence.

Head of Policy and Practice

(based in London)

£48,312 - £51,912 salary range

plus excellent benefits including final salary pension scheme

This post will be responsible for developing the new policy and practice section within the association. This covers a wide range of areas including Lifetime Homes, Accessible Housing Registers, Adaptation services and Disability Equality Schemes. Building upon our existing research and good practice reputation the role will lead on the promotion of disability equality issues within the organisation and the housing sector. The postholder will need to co-ordinate bidding for funding, developing and delivering research projects and communicating key messages. The postholder will also develop our service "offer" to external organisations that enhance their performance on disability equality.

The closing date for applications is 20th March 2007

Interviews will take place on 17th April 2007

For a confidential discussion about the post, contact Sam Longbottom on 0207 822 8728.

For further information and an application pack, please contact:

Human Resources, Habinteg Housing Association,
Holyer House, 20 -21 Red Lion Court, London EC4A 3EB

Tel: 020 7822 8761 (answerphone)

e-mail: info@habinteg.org.uk

www.habinteg.org.uk/recruitment

In line with our goals on Diversity we welcome applications from every section of the community. CVs will be accepted but only with a supporting statement



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